

X-FACTOR

#232 | MARVEL

DAVID

LUPACCHINO

ORTEGO

MILLA



RATED T+
\$2.99US
DIRECT EDITION
MARVEL.COM

23211



7 59606-05878-5

Founded by Jamie Madrox and staffed by a group of the best mutant heroes around, when superhumanity needs a detective agency, they call on X-Factor Investigations.

X-FACTOR



PREVIOUSLY

Having apparently been murdered by the demonic Bloodbath, Madrox is ricocheting through alternate realities via the bodies of other recently slain Madrox-Primes. Having left behind dimensions where Rahne has a grown, vicious daughter and Steve Rogers is the cyborg Deathlok, he's now landed in the middle of a climactic showdown between Doctor Strange and an alternate Dormammu. While that's happening, Layla has faithfully sat vigil on his slain body, hoping for a miracle.

Meanwhile: Peter David is now on Twitter (as @PeterDavid_PAD) along with such luminaries as Axel Alonso, Brian Bendis and Tom Brevoort. Lots of people are following him, which is good for his ego but lousy for his paranoia.

PETER DAVID
writer

MATT MILLA
colorist

JORDAN D. WHITE
assistant editor

AXEL ALONSO
editor in chief

EMANUELA LUPACCHINO
penciler

VC'S CORY PETIT
letterer

DANIEL KETCHUM
editor

JOE QUESADA
chief creative officer

GUILLERMO ORTEGO
inker

DAVID YARDIN
cover artist

NICK LOWE
x-men group editor

DAN BUCKLEY
publisher

ALAN FINE
executive producer

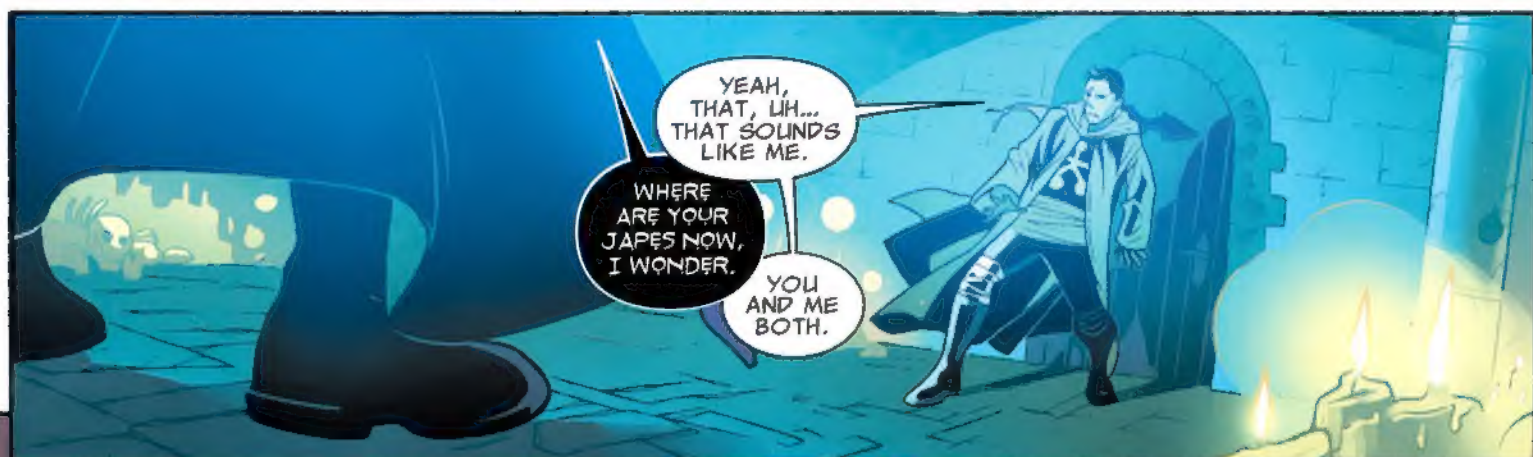
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WELL,
DISCIPLE?
NOTHING
TO SAY?

YOU WERE
CERTAINLY CONFIDENT
ENOUGH WHEN YOU
WERE HIDING BEHIND
YOUR MASTER'S
CLOAK.

YOU WERE
FILLED WITH
TAUNTS AND
GIBES, AS I
RECALL.



YEAH,
THAT, UH...
THAT SOUNDS
LIKE ME.

WHERE
ARE YOUR
JAPES NOW,
I WONDER.

YOU
AND ME
BOTH.



SO, UH...
LOOK, THIS
MAY SOUND A
LITTLE WEIRD,
BUT...

I HAVE
NO FREAKING
CLUE WHAT'S
GOING ON.

BUT I CAN
SEE YOU'RE
BUSY BEING EVIL
AND STUFF,
SO...



I'LL
JUST LET
MYSELF--

--OUT...

THE THING THAT'S MOST INTERESTING ABOUT BEING CATAPULTED FROM ONE REALITY TO THE NEXT...

...IS THAT EVERY TIME I THINK TO MYSELF IT CAN'T POSSIBLY GET ANY WORSE...

...I'M PROVEN WRONG.

A STENCH OF BRIMSTONE FILLS THE AIR. IT'S LIKE BEING AT A NIGHTCRAWLER CONVENTION.

AND A BLAST OF HEAT HITS ME LIKE A FIST.

SO MUCH FOR THIRD TIME BEING THE CHARM.

NO SIGN OF TRYPP. NO SIGN OF ANYTHING.



THEY KEEP KILLING
MADROX
CONCLUSION



WHERE DO
YOU THINK YOU'RE
GOING?

ON THIS DAY
WHEN I'VE FINALLY
BESTED EARTH'S
GREATEST
SORCERER...



YOU DON'T THINK
I'LL LET HIS PATHETIC
APPRENTICE SURVIVE,
DO YOU?



I DON'T THINK SPREADING
SALT IN THE DOORWAY, LIKE
LAYLA DID WHEN THE HQ WAS
UNDER ATTACK, IS GONNA
GET IT DONE THIS TIME.

LOOK...
THIS IS ALL
A BIG
MISTAKE...

YES
YOURS...



WHEN YOU
ALLIED YOURSELF
WITH THE WRONG
MAGE!



LET THE
FLAMES OF THE
FAL TIME ERASE
YOU FROM
EXISTENCE!



WHOA!



DEFLECTING THE FAL TINE FLAMES?

I MAY WELL HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOU.

TO SAY NOTHING OF THE FACT THAT I ALREADY KILLED YOU ONCE.

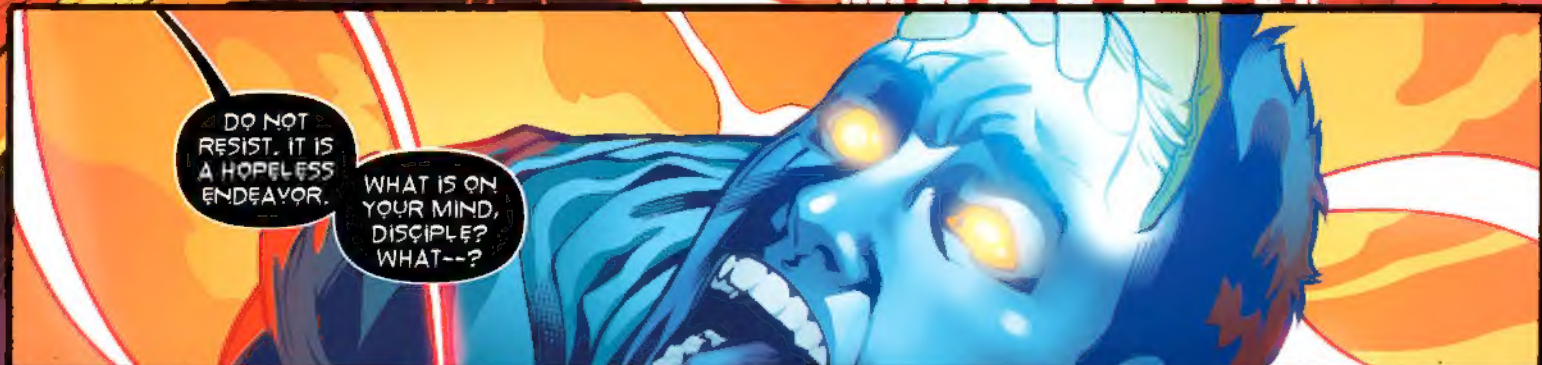
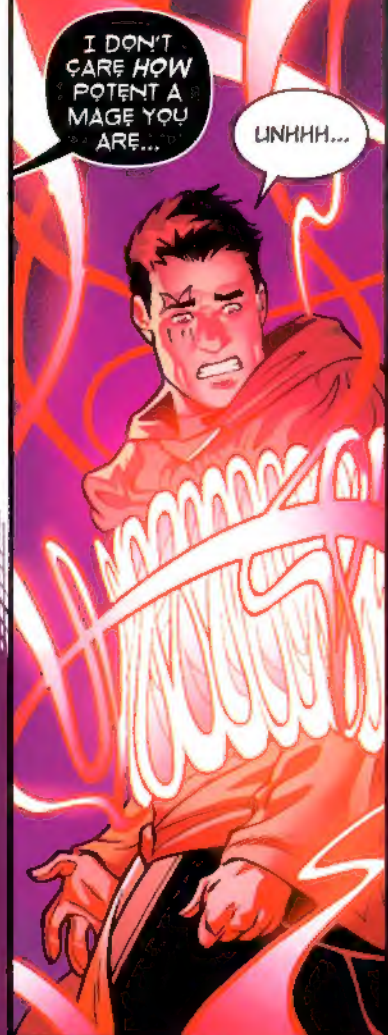
WHERE'D THIS COME FROM?




THERE MAY INDEED BE MORE TO YOU THAN I PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT.



YOU MIGHT WELL BE WORTH CLOSER SCRUTINY.





WELL, WELL.
YOU DID NOT
EXAGGERATE. YOU
TRULY ARE *NOT*
OF THIS REALM.

YOU HAVE
NO IDEA OF
THE LIFE YOU
LED HERE...

AND THE NAME
DORMAMMU
MEANS NOTHING
TO YOU.

INSTEAD YOU
EXPERIENCE DEATH
AFTER DEATH AND
TRAVEL FROM ONE
PLACE TO THE
NEXT.

AND THERE IS A
GHOSTLY, BEARDED
INDIVIDUAL WHO IS
INVOLVED IN ALL
THIS SOMEHOW.

HOW
TRAGICALLY
MARVELOUS.

BUT THAT
STILL DOES NOT
ANSWER THE QUESTION
OF HOW YOU MANAGED
TO BRUSH ASIDE THE
FLAMES OF THE
FAL TIME...



IF YOU
THINK *THAT'S*
CONFUSING...



...JUST
WAIT.

WH-
WHAT--?



IMPOSSIBLE!!!!



NOT ONLY POSSIBLE,
DARK ONE...BUT
EXTREMELY
LIKELY...



...WHEN ONE IS
DEALING WITH A
MASTER OF THE
MYSTIC ARTS!

I SHOULD
HAVE
KNOWN!

YES. YOU
SHOULD
HAVE.



BUT OUR
BATTLE TOOK
A GOOD DEAL
OUT OF YOU,
DORMAMMU. YOU
MAY HAVE SLAIN
ME, BUT YOUR
BLUSTERING IS
COVERING THE
PERSONAL
COST.



GIVEN TIME,
OF COURSE,
YOU MIGHT
REGAIN THAT
STRENGTH.



YOU AND
YOUR MINIONS
HAVE PERVERTED
THIS WORLD DURING
THE HELL ON EARTH
WAR, BUT FINALLY...
FINALLY...IT
WILL END.

BECAUSE
THE TRUTH IS THAT
YOU NEVER BELONGED
HERE, NO MATTER HOW
YOU'VE TRIED TO
STAMP YOUR ESSENCE
UPON IT.

THIS WORLD
WOULD HAVE
YOU OUT!
DEPART!

DEPART! DEPART!

OKAY...SOMEONE
WANT TO TELL ME
WHAT IN HELL IS
GOING ON?



HUH? YOU'RE...
TALKING TO MY
INNER MONOLOGUE?
THAT'S...



I WAS
GONNA SAY
"STRANGE."

YES. IT
TRULY IS.



UNFORTUNATELY,
DORMAMMU
ACCOMPLISHED HIS
GOAL. HE TRULY
DID KILL ME.



SO...I WAS YOUR
DISCIPLE? AND
I DID HAVE--



YES.
YOU DID.



AND YOU WERE A WORTHY DISCIPLE, JAMES.

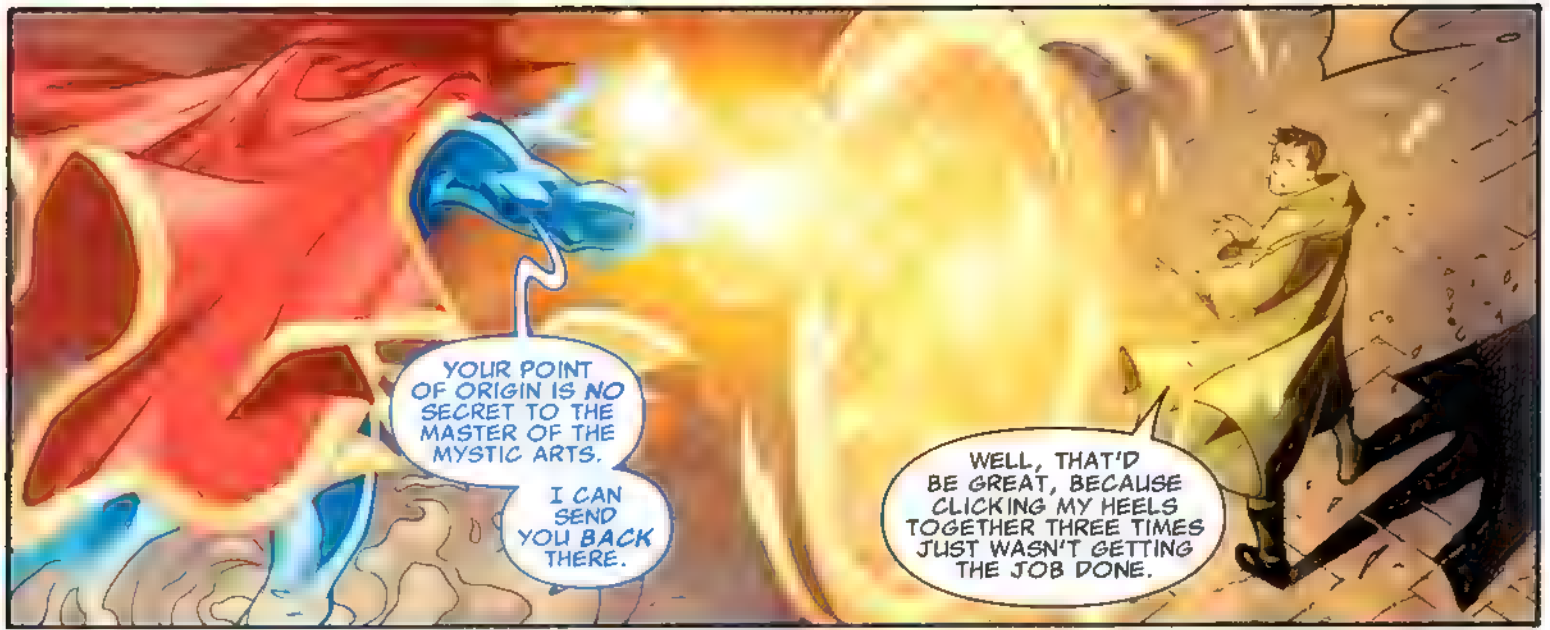
BUT THEN, I NEVER DID TEACH "YOU," DID I?

WITH THE DEMISE OF MY CORPOREAL FORM, MY TIME HERE IS SHORT.

I WISH THAT I COULD HAVE HAD TIME TO TEACH YOU MORE.



STILL... THERE IS ONE SERVICE I CAN STILL PROVIDE YOU.



YOUR POINT OF ORIGIN IS NO SECRET TO THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS.

I CAN SEND YOU BACK THERE.

WELL, THAT'D BE GREAT, BECAUSE CLICKING MY HEELS TOGETHER THREE TIMES JUST WASN'T GETTING THE JOB DONE.



SO THIS'LL TAKE ME HOME?



NOT DIRECTLY. IT WILL REVERSE YOUR VOYAGE...TAKE YOU BACK ALONG THE PATH YOU FOLLOWED AND ULTIMATELY TO YOUR OWN DIMENSION.

BUT BE SURE NOT TO ENTER UNTIL I TELL YOU.

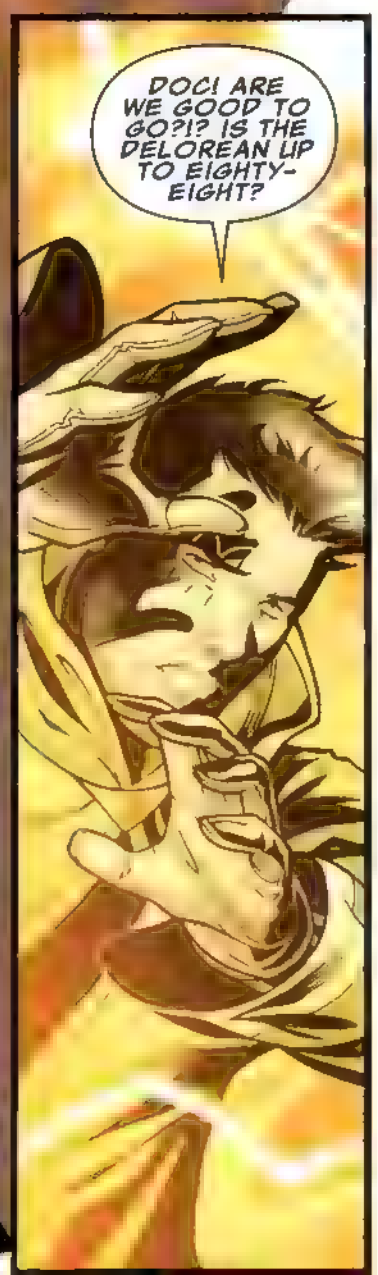


AND I WON'T HAVE TO DIE AGAIN?

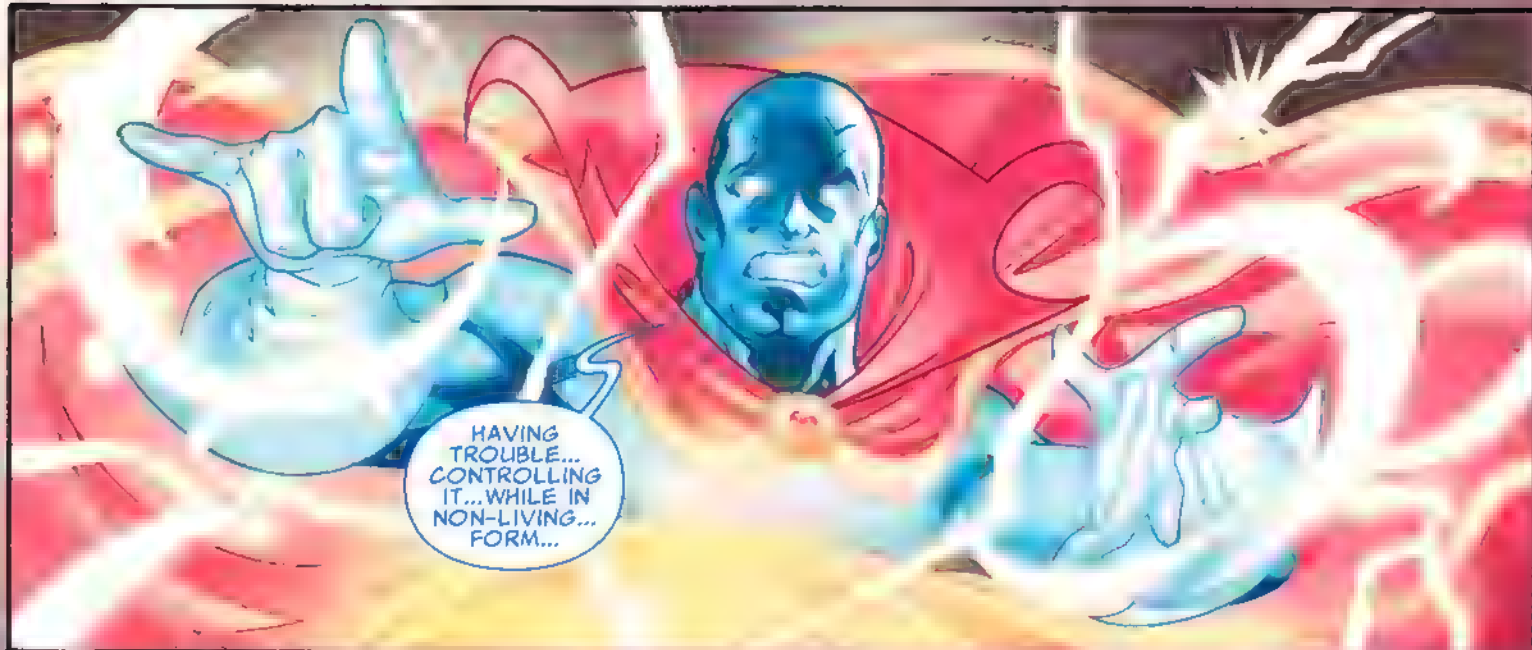
I DON'T SEE WHY YOU WOULD.

WELL, THAT WOULD BE A NICE CHANGE OF PACE.

SO DO I JUMP IN, DOC?

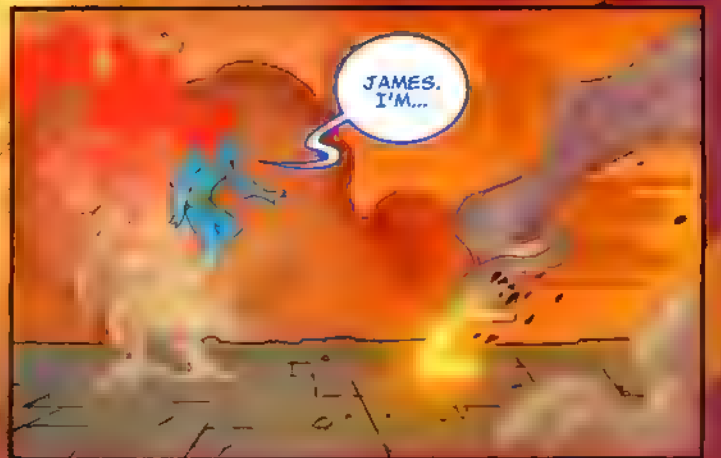


DOC! ARE WE GOOD TO GO?!? IS THE DELOREAN UP TO EIGHTY-EIGHT?





JAMES,
NO!!!



JAMES.
I'M...



I'M SO
SORRY.. I WILL
NOT BE ABLE TO
ASSIST YOU WITH
WHAT COMES
NEX--



COLD...
SO...

...SO
COLD...

WHERE AM I?
THE ARCTIC?

HANDS...
NUMB. CAN
BARELY FEEL--

AH. OKAY...
THAT'S...THAT'S
GOOD...THAT'S...

THAT'S WARM...
YES...WARMTH...
FEELING MUCH...

YES...
SO MUCH
BETTER.





I KNEW IT.
I KNEW YOU'D
BE BACK.
OH GOD,
I'VE WASTED
SO MUCH
TIME...

LAYLA,
IS...IS THIS
WHERE--?



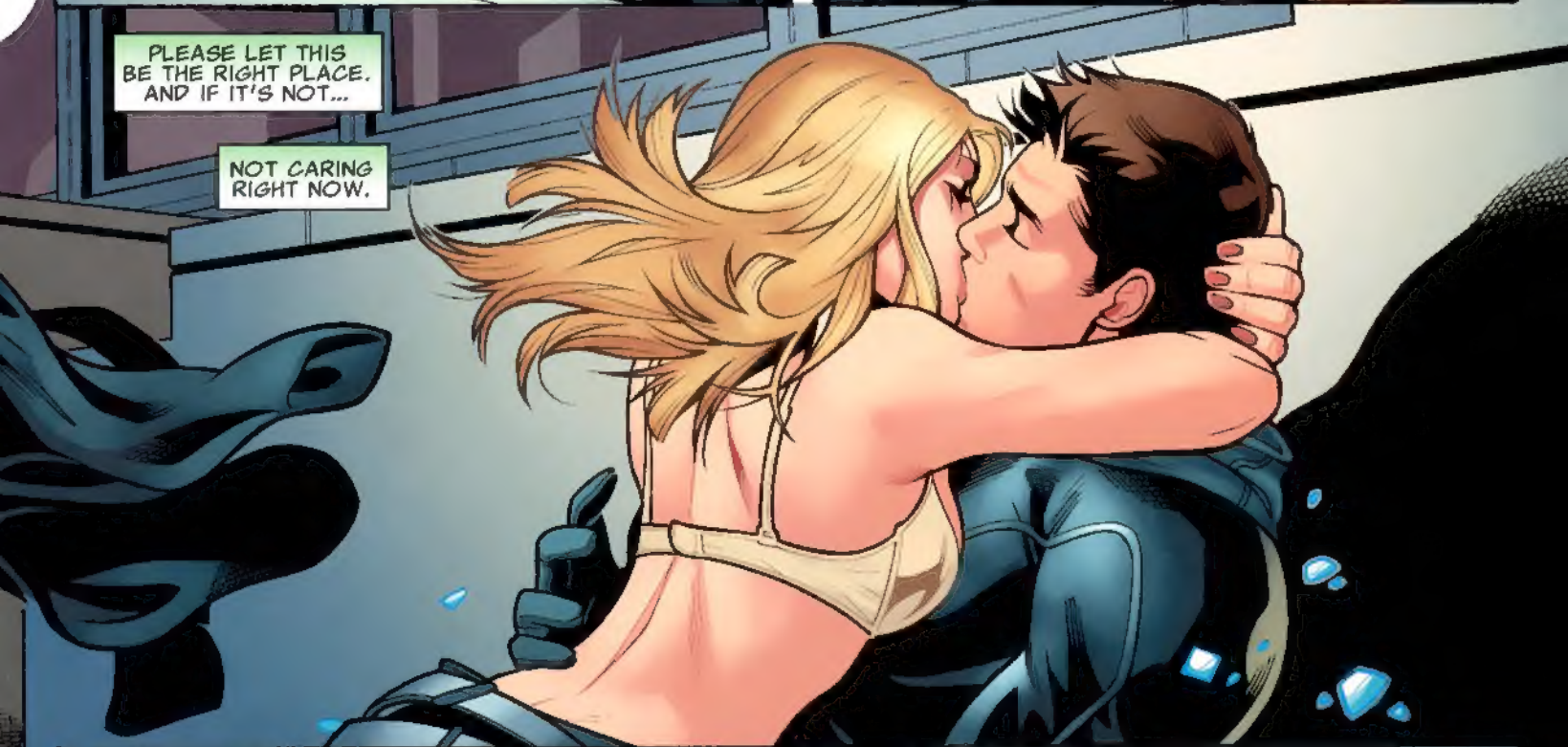
YES, GOD
YES, THIS IS
WHERE YOU'RE
SUPPOSED
TO BE.

NO MORE
WAITING. NO
MORE...

STILL...
FEELING
CHILLED...I
DON'T...



DON'T
WORRY.
I'LL WARM
YOU UP.



PLEASE LET THIS
BE THE RIGHT PLACE.
AND IF IT'S NOT...

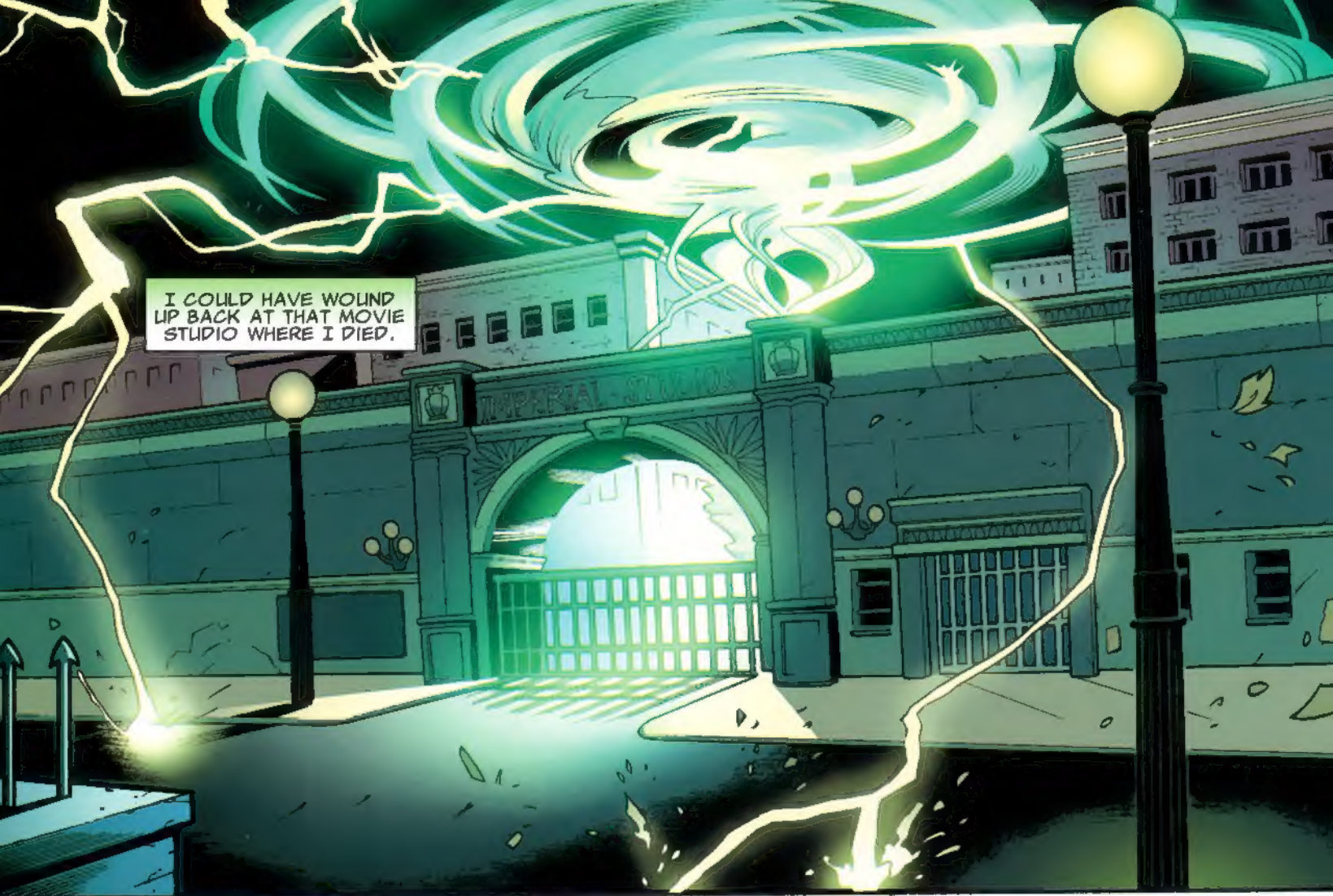
NOT CARING
RIGHT NOW.



NO. IT'S RIGHT.
I KNOW IT IS.

AND THIS IS
THE BEST
HOMECOMING
EVER.

AND I
SHOULDN'T
KNOCK IT.



I COULD HAVE WOUND
UP BACK AT THAT MOVIE
STUDIO WHERE I DIED.



HOW MUCH
WOULD
THAT SUCK?



INSTEAD I'M HERE...
IN LAYLA'S ARMS...
AND IT FINALLY SEEMS
RIGHT TO BE HERE...
TO BE ANYWHERE.

AND I WON'T HAVE
TO WORRY ABOUT
ANY OF THOSE INSANE
WORLDS EVER AGAIN.



WHAT--

--THE--

--HELL?

X THE END...?

X-FACTOR WITNESSES

WRITE TO US AT
OFFICEX@MARVEL.COM
AND MARK
"OK TO PRINT!"

Peter David here, along with team XF (we need jackets), welcoming you to the absolute best lettercol in any book titled "X-Factor." Letters may be edited for length (or changed if you misspelled words like "minuscule," which just annoys us to no end) but not content.

Dear PAD and other creative figures responsible for X-Factor,

Being a fairly young comic collector, X-Factor (vol. 3) was actually one of the first titles I started collecting. I remember my first issue being number #21, but before that I bought "The Longest Night" TPB, and ever since I've been enamored with this fantastic series. I think it's the fact that there's the comic-book-style fighting and intelligence combined with the wit and cesspool of relationships that does it for me; very few other titles actually have those more basic problems and if they do, they're not all that original. Additionally, it's great how much you address the diversity of the members (i.e. nationality, sexuality, religion) because I feel that many writers get too caught up in the story and forget that that's what the X-Men are about.

Anyways, I had to stop collecting after #205 because of financial issues, but now that I'm at university, my student loan is being well spent, and I couldn't have picked a better time to rejoin. I like the ongoing romantic problems between Rictor and Shatterstar, and you completely deserved the GLAAD award. I remember reading that issue for the first time actually and think what a breakthrough for Marvel it was. I'd been reading Runaways at the time also, and was always disappointed that Marvel would refrain from showing Karolina and Xavin kissing on panel. Furthermore, Monet's religious admittance was a fantastic moment. It epitomized what X-Men and X-Factor and every X-Related title has strived for: acceptance in the face of fear, standing up for your beliefs. Also, I enjoy the fact that Damien Tryp is from Wales, and that they called him Dai. That was a nice little tidbit regarding my home country that I enjoyed (a little more than the fact that Pixie's from the same place, plus we don't have many villains from Wales).

Until Monet is modest, Make Mine Marvel!
Dan Bowen

Welcome back to the fold, Dan. I'm glad matters are stabilizing for you financially and am pleased you can spend some of your dough on us. As for Runaways, just think of it as a sign of the times that subject matter that was once shied away from can be addressed directly. I think it's a more honest way to approach things.

Dear Peter and X-Factor Team...

First off, X-Factor Investigations is my favorite book Marvel prints. You guys rock.

Now for business. Ever since Madrox had a dupe child, an idea sprouted in the back of my brain, and every subsequent issue that sprang forth, it grew until I had to ask. It is established that every dupe of Madrox is a splintered personality of himself,

so the question is, if every dupe is a personality... would that mean that the baby dupe in a sense would represent Madrox Prime's inner child? I think it would be a interesting development to see Prime Madrox summon a dupe only to have baby dupe come forth representing his inner child.

From Tristan Christ

Well, Tristan, who says we've actually established that every dupe of Madrox is a splintered personality of himself? That's what Jamie thinks. But he may not be right, as suggested in the current storyline where he's bouncing around dimensions. Perhaps he's been wrong all this time. Perhaps he really is simply pulling alternate versions of himself from parallel universes, and then they return home when he's done with them. Which could mean that in some alternate world, Baby Sean is alive, well, and just beginning to embark on his life of adventuring. After all, we've already seen an example of a baby dupe, all the way back with Jamie's origin. This is X-Factor. No answers come easily here.

Dear X-Factor team,

Thanks for giving us the most consistently good X-book out there. With so many plots to look for in the future, there are more than few questions that pop to mind. But I would expect an answer to be of the RAFO type, so here is a current one: Flipping through issue 230 I finally noticed the team members all wear the same double belt. Is it as close as it gets to a team uniform? Or some sort of product placement?

Best regards,
Milan Barjaktarevic

Product placement, Milan. Which reminds me, have I sung the praises lately of Double X belts, made for the stylish mutant with waist sizes up to ninety inches? The Blob used to be their spokesperson, but the poor guy lost the endorsement after M-Day.

Dear PAD,

I just read your answer to a letter that Shatterstar behaves the way he behaves because he is Bi. Please don't mix up bisexuality with polyamory or just being sleeping around. Bisexuality means you are attracted by both sexes, it doesn't mean that one of them isn't enough, or that a bisexual doesn't feel satisfied with being with just one sex. Bisexuals can be very monogamous, too, and for your interest bisexuality often isn't 50:50, many bisexuals tend to have slight preferences. So please don't depict Shatterstar as a cheat because he is bisexual, there are many reasons you can choose--I for one always thought he just has no idea how to deal with humans at all.

Now to the positive part: I have read your X-Factor from the beginning and am mostly very happy with it, although the "God" talk starts to get on my nerves. I think it must be hard to stay with Christian/Muslim believe if you have been to Hel and other similar places already. I was really astounded about the

discussion in #230 with all the experiences the team has already had.

I really liked the alternative realities idea; I am tensed for what will come. Although I was a little disappointed that the marriage-reality was such a short episode, I thought it looked like a very awesome world and I hope we may see something of it again. I also look forward to hearing from Rahne's son in the future. To my opinion he has an excellent foster daddy.

Thank you for all your work!
Kate Fire

Y'know, Kate, in the early days of Marvel, lettercols didn't even discuss subjects like, I dunno, what was the Thing and Alicia's deal, or just how fantastic was Reed Richards, or for that matter, over at DC, just how wild did it get between Bouncing Boy and Duo Damsel? And now we're talking about the fine points of distinguishing polyamory from bisexuality? Okay, fine. Shatterstar is polyamorous and bisexual. Howzat? (Please don't let Stan Lee be reading this.)

Dear Mr. David and Team,

I wanted to write and thank you for the excellent care you've given to some of my favorite characters. My brother and I first started collecting comics with X-Force #1. I grew up loving Shatterstar, Siryn, and Rictor. I've become somewhat disillusioned with the industry as of late because of universe reboots and the like, but not with X-Factor. I don't collect every issue like I used to but X-Factor is a must for me now. It started most recently with the inclusion of FERAL for a few issues. Feral is my absolute favorite character! There are a few characters where I'll pick up anything they're in. She's one of them. She was drawn beautifully too! Thank you for bringing her back to life (I think?). Can that be clarified please? That way I can keep an eye out for her. Having your favorite character dead...well, it sucks! This is my first letter to a comic book, but I felt compelled to do so. Thanks again for the superb writing.

Until you reboot your entire universe, Make Mine Marvel!

Doug Seckman

Well, Doug, Feral's still with us, but stuck firmly in the "dead" department. But look at the bright side: she can't get any deader. As for rebooting the entire universe, boy, that sure does sound like the ultimate way to...wait. Hold on. That's an idea. Hey, Axel! What would you think of some sort of ultimate Marvel universe, where we could... Axel? Why are you giving me that weird look again...?

PAD

**NEXT ISSUE:
THE SOMEWHAT-NEW,
SLIGHTLY-DIFFERENT
X-FACTOR!**